DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 384 992 EA 026 893

AUTHOR	Shields, Patrick M.; And Others
TITLE	Improving Schools from the Bottom Up: From Effective Schools to Restructuring. Summary Volume.
INSTITUTION	SRI International, Menlo Park, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC. Office of the Under Secretary.
REPORT NO	ED/OUS-95-6; ISBN-0-16-048102-3
PUB DATE	95
CONTRACT	LC90035001
NOTE	58p.
AVAILABLE FROM	U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; Educational Improvement; *Effective Schools Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Programs; *School Based Management; *School Effectiveness; *School Restructuring; State Surveys

ABSTRACT

This document presents findings from a congressionally mandated study of school-based reform, which developed in tandem with congressional interest in making the Chapter 2 program more focused on school-improvement efforts. Data were obtained from a survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,550 school districts; mail and telephone surveys of all state education agencies; and case studies of reform efforts in 5 states, 16 school districts, and 32 schools. Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter offers school portraits and survey data to describe the nature and extent of school-based reform. The third chapter describes how schools and local districts work together to support school-based reform. The fourth chapter describes the role of states and the federal government in facilitating and inhibiting school change. Promising school-based reform efforts occurred in schools that focused on the classroom (curriculum, teaching, and learning); developed a collaborative professional culture; and made maximum effort to develop professional capacities. Eleven exhibits and 11 figures are included. Contains 14 references. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

EA

ED 384 992

IMPROVING SCHOOLS FROM THE BOTTOM UP: FROM EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS TO RESTRUCTURING

SUMMARY VOLUME

1995

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

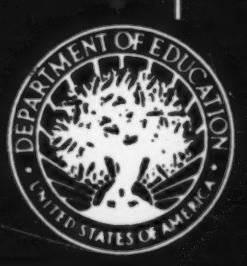
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA 026 893



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION • OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

1995

IMPROVING SCHOOLS FROM THE BOTTOM UP: FROM EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS TO RESTRUCTURING

SUMMARY VOLUME

Prepared by:

Patrick M. Shields, SRI International
Michael S. Knapp, University of Washington
Marjorie E. Wechsler, SRI International

with the assistance of:

Lee Anderson, SRI International
Jerry D. Bamburg, University of Washington
Evelyn F. Hawkins, SRI International
Edys Quellmalz, SRI International
Joan Ruskus, SRI International
Choya L. Wilson, SRI International

SRI Project HSU-1609
ED Contract LC90035001

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Education
Office of the Under Secretary
Planning and Evaluation Service
Washington, D.C. 20202

This report was prepared pursuant to Contract Number LC90035001, U.S. Department of Education (Nancy Loy, Project Officer).

The views expressed in this report, developed under contract to the U.S. Department of Education, do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department, and no official endorsement by the Department should be inferred.

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328
ISBN 0-16-048102-3

We wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the members of the Working Group for the Study of Effective Schools Programs:

Dr. Celesta Brandon, National Consortium of Chapter 2 State Advisory Committees
Dr. Robert W. Covert, University of Virginia, Curry School of Education
Dr. Richard F. Elmore, Harvard University Graduate School of Education
Dr. Joy A. Frechtling, Westat
Dr. Elenore Freedman, Consultant
Dr. Beverly Caffee Glenn, Howard University School of Education
Ms. Anne T. Henderson, National Committee for Citizens in Education
Dr. Michael Murphy, State of Idaho, Department of Education
Dr. Fred M. Newmann, National Center on Effective Secondary Schools
Dr. Joan Shoemaker, State of Connecticut, Department of Education
Dr. Thomas A. Teeter, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

In addition, we would like to thank Dr. Richard Hardebeck of the Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas, and the following individuals from the U.S. Department of Education for their helpful comments:

Carol Chelemer
Barbara Coates
Alicia Coro
Thomas Corwin
Julie Edmunds
Robert Kastner
Nancy Loy
Theresa Mahoney
Valena Plisko
Valerie Rogers
Zulla Toney

CONTENTS

I Introduction 1

Federal Support for School-Based Reform 1
The National Study of Effective Schools and School-Based Reform 2
Organization of the Document 3

II Patterns and Portraits of Reform 5

Portraits of Changing Schools 5
Incidence of School-Based Reform 9
Making Sense of the Variety of School-Based Reforms 12
Focus on Instruction 12
Professional Culture of the School 15
Opportunities for Professional Growth 18
Summing Up: Promising School-Based Reform Efforts 21

III How Schools and Districts Create Conditions That Support School-Based Reform 23

Joint Actions by District and School 24
Providing Strong Leadership for School-Based Reform 24
Influencing Who Is in the School 27
Providing Professional Development Opportunities 28
Building School Staff Support for Reform Goals 31
Garnering Resources 32
Assessing and Sharing Information about School Performance 32
Developing Parental and Community Support 33
Actions Taken Primarily by the District 33
Setting and Waiving Requirements 33
Managing Forces and Conditions Outside the School's Control 34
Summing Up: The School and District Working Together 36

IV State and Federal Support for School-Based Reform 37

Portraits of State Support for School-Based Reform 37
What States Are Doing to Support School-Based Reform 37
Setting Goals for Student Learning 39
Balancing Authority Relationships 40
Providing Technical Assistance and Professional Development 41
Financing Local Reforms 42
Creating Appropriate Accountability Mechanisms 43
Summing Up: The Emerging State Role in Supporting Reform 44

Federal Support for School-Based Reform 45
Federal Mandates as Reasons for Initiating School-Based Reform 45
Federal Funds and Support for Reform 47
Summing Up: The Evolving Federal Role 47

References 49

EXHIBITS

1 Building on the Effective Schools Model: South Mission High School 6

2 Changing a School from the Classroom Out: Cicely Elementary 7

3 Slow Going: The Beginning of Change in Petersburg Elementary 8

4 Alternative Approaches to Assessment 15

5 Flattening the Hierarchy at an Inner-City High School 16

6 Teachers as In-House Experts 20

7 District or School as Driving Force for Reform 26

8 Catalytic and Sustaining Leadership at the School Level 27

9 Knowledge of the Change Process 30

10 California: Combining Challenging Curriculum and School Autonomy in Pursuit of Reform 38

11 Washington: Promoting Local Ownership of the Reform Process 39

FIGURES

1	National Incidence of School-Based Reform, by District Size	9
2	Incidence of School-Based Reform According to Specific Criteria, by District Size	10
3	First Year of School-Based Reform Efforts	11
4	Extent to Which Reform Strategies Focus on Curriculum and Instruction	13
5	Areas in Which Districts Grant Increased Authority to Schools	17
6	Relative Responsibility of State, District, and School Staff in Initiating and Coordinating School-Based Reform	25
7	Authority Granted to Schools over Staff Assignment and Hiring, by District Size	29
8	District Waivers for Schools Engaged in Reforms, by District Size	35
9	Types of Waivers Granted Schools Engaged in Reform, by District Size	35
10	Sources of Funding for School-Based Reform	42
11	Reasons for Initiating State Support for School-Based Reform	46

I INTRODUCTION

Over the past 15 years, divergent solutions for improving the nation's schools have gained and lost popularity. Yet, most of these reform proposals share a common argument: effective change requires the active involvement and commitment of the school-level community. This focus on the school enjoys both intuitive appeal and research support. Intuitively, it makes sense that teachers, school administrators, and parents—those closest to children—are best positioned to craft educational strategies to meet the needs of their particular students. Decades of research have underscored the limits of top-down reform (e.g., McLaughlin, 1987) while consistently identifying a series of school-level factors associated with a high degree of student success (Purkey & Smith, 1983; David & Shields, 1991).

Thus, beginning with what became known as the "effective schools" movement in the mid-1970s, reformers consistently have sought ways of promoting some type of school-level control over the change process. Based on studies of unusually effective schools (e.g., Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds & Fredericksen, 1978), model improvement efforts were designed through which school staff sought to increase student achievement by following a prescribed set of steps intended to create the correlates of effectiveness—such as strong leadership from the principal, a pervasive instructional focus, an orderly and safe climate, high expectations for students, and continuous assessment of student achievement (see Edmonds, 1979; 1982). Subsequent reform movements in the 1980s placed a greater emphasis on school-level decision-making authority (David, 1989), and on broader and more fundamental changes in the structure and organization of school life—what came to be known as "restructuring" (Elmore & Associates, 1991).

Federal Support for School-Based Reform

Support for school reform has long been a mainstay of the federal agenda for education. This commitment was strengthened in 1994 by the passage of two key education laws: the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Title I of IASA, which replaces Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), strongly encourages the use of its funds for schoolwide improvement efforts in schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged children. The

schoolwide reform and school flexibility emphases of the federal Chapter 2 program have also been retained in the new legislation (now Title VI: Innovative Education Program Strategies). Goals 2000, the federal framework for education reform, encourages and supports school-level change and directs professional development resources to school-level educators. Both pieces of legislation recognize that individual schools are the necessary targets of successful reform efforts and that educators closest to the classroom are vital to sustaining these efforts.*

The National Study of Effective Schools and School-Based Reform

In this document, we present findings and conclusions from a congressionally mandated study of school-based reform, which developed in tandem with congressional interest in making the Chapter 2 program, as reauthorized by the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Education Amendments, more focused on school improvement efforts. For purposes of the study, we have cast our net widely to include a wide range of improvement activities located and controlled at the school site that have as their goal the development of a schoolwide capacity for problem solving, the improvement of teaching, and increased academic achievement for all students. The goals of the study were to:

- Estimate the incidence of school-based reform nationally, describe what school-based reform looks like inside of schools, and assess its effects on classroom practice.
- Describe and assess local district support for school-based reform.
- Describe and assess state support for school-based reform.
- Identify the role of the Chapter 2 program (and other federal programs) in stimulating and supporting school change efforts at the school, district, and state levels.

Data for the study were collected during the 1991-92 school year and included:

- A survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,550 school districts, in which we asked district administrators to respond to questions about district support for school-based reform efforts and about their most comprehensive school-level improvement effort.

---

* The research summarized in this volume predates IASA and Goals 2000. However, recent education legislation and ongoing state and local school reform developments reinforce the lessons of the study.

- Mail and telephone surveys of all state education agencies, in which we asked state-level administrators to describe reform efforts in their states.

- Case studies of reform efforts in 5 states, 16 school districts, and 32 schools. These involved on-site visits of approximately 1 week in which we interviewed administrators and teachers, observed classrooms and team meetings, and reviewed relevant documents. These case studies form the basis for many conclusions about how school-based reform operates, as well as providing illustrative vignettes throughout the report.

The states we visited are California, Connecticut, Kentucky, South Dakota, and Washington State. By agreement with the local educators who gave so freely of their time and ideas, we are not publishing the names of any individuals, schools, or districts involved in the study. The research findings, as well as a detailed description of our methods, can be found in the formal technical report (Shields et al., 1995).

Organization of the Document

In the following chapter, we describe the nature and extent of school-based reform through portraits of schools involved in change, as well as survey data on the national incidence of reform activities. In the third chapter, we describe school and district support for reform. In the fourth chapter, we present our findings on the role of states and the federal government in facilitating (and inhibiting) school-based change.

II PATTERNS AND PORTRAITS OF REFORM

School-based reform refers to a wide range of planned improvement efforts that focus on a particular school and grant a substantial measure of control to school-level educators. In each school involved in reform, the story evolves in unique ways, reflecting a host of contextual factors and school-specific goals and conditions. To underscore this complexity, we first describe what school-based reform means in three schools we visited. Next, we use the national survey data to describe national patterns of school-based reform. We then describe three criteria that help to distinguish key differences among reforming schools.

Portraits of Changing Schools

Reform has very different meanings from school to school. In one case, reform involves rethinking—and making fundamental changes in—every aspect of school life from decision making to teaching and learning. In another school, what is labeled reform may mean little more than the adoption of a new schedule of meetings among school staff. Three portraits of school-based reform efforts highlight these differences.

The first two cases—South Mission High School* (Exhibit 1) and Cicely Elementary (Exhibit 2)—provide examples of schools that have enacted and sustained wide-ranging reforms, albeit in very different ways. South Mission, a secondary school, has built on a well-developed model of reform—the effective schools process. The reform strategy was devised and adopted by the district superintendent and only later accepted by school staff. The approach involved devising schoolwide improvement plans. In contrast, reform efforts in Cicely followed no preset model and were initiated by a group of teachers, later to be adopted by the rest of the staff and the district administration. Here, the reformers initially focused on shifts in classroom and content-specific practice, then broadened their efforts into a larger schoolwide change effort.

These two portraits show schools progressing toward substantial changes. In both, teachers' expectations for student learning have increased, decision-making processes have changed, new opportunities for professional development have been developed, and what takes place in the classroom between teachers and students and among students has shifted to a more challenging, integrated, problem-solving, hands-on, real-life-based approach to learning.

---

* All school names are pseudonyms.

Exhibit 1

Building on the Effective Schools Model: South Mission High School

South Mission High School is located in what once was a predominantly rural, white, agricultural area that over the past decade has experienced rapid population growth and the influx of a large number of Latino students (who now make up a third of the district's enrollment). Since 1987, the entire district has been involved in the effective schools process. Here, effective schools are defined by seven correlates: clear and specific purposes, strong educational leadership, high expectations for students, mastery of basic skills, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive climate for learning, and partnership with parents and community. All staff are required to go through effective schools training, and principals are evaluated on the extent to which these correlates are present in their schools.

Following the effective schools model and district requirements, South Mission has established a school council that oversees the work of seven teacher-staffed subcommittees that correspond roughly to the correlates of effective schools. Each subcommittee, with the assistance of structured survey instruments, assesses how well the school is doing relative to its particular correlate. On the basis of this information, recommendations for changes in school policy or other actions are forwarded to the school council, which in turn makes recommendations to the principal.

This process of bringing teachers together in a formal way to assess and discuss the school's strengths and weaknesses has led to a number of reforms in the school. The first set of these changes involves safety and school climate. The school has instituted a split lunch period to reduce the number of students out of classrooms at the same time. The campus has been closed to outsiders, and a student leadership team has been established to discuss concerns and address problems among the different groups in the student body.

The second set of reforms relates more directly to teaching and learning. Given its changing student population, the school staff has decided to create a "Welcome Center," essentially a transitional period for new immigrant students where students are exposed to basic English and taught the procedures and rules of American high schools. To serve this same population, the curriculum now includes a series of English as a second language and bilingual classes. Finally, an extra tutoring session has been set up and transportation schedules changed to accommodate students who need to stay at school late for tutoring.

Perhaps most important, according to teachers, has been a change in attitudes about the ability of students to succeed. The effective schools training that teachers have received emphasizes the idea that all students can learn. On the basis of this training and their reading of research on student grouping, the teachers (with a push from the district) have chosen to virtually eliminate tracking from the school. Except for advanced placement courses and the Welcome Center, there are no tracks in the school. If students are not succeeding, it is the responsibility of the teacher to modify his/her instructional practices.

Exhibit 2

Changing a School from the Classroom Out: Cicely Elementary

Cicely Elementary serves about 800 students in a rural agricultural region. The community is predominantly Latino, and a large portion of the families moved to the area to work in the surrounding fields. Over 85 percent of the students are from Latino backgrounds; 60 percent are classified as limited English proficient; and a third of the student population come from families who migrate with the seasonal crops.

Over the past 4 years, the school has been involved in a reform process that began with the training of eight teachers in an alternative approach to science teaching. The new approach stresses hands-on learning with real-life applications, the organization of instruction in thematic units, and cooperative learning. As more teachers have been trained in this approach, and with the strong support of the principal and the superintendent (who brought the program to the district), it has spread throughout the school and been integrated into all subject areas. Now science and technology themes are used as the basis for developing writing, reading, and numeracy skills in the primarily bilingual student population. Moreover, the teachers have abandoned the district's grade-based report cards in favor of narrative assessments based on the use of portfolios and experimental, teacher-developed authentic assessment instruments.

To further advance this form of teaching and learning, the staff has begun to experiment with multigraded classrooms. Four teachers and 100 students are grouped together in a "quad" of four classrooms. Two of the classrooms are used primarily as laboratories (one for natural science, one for technology), and the other two classrooms are used to teach a curriculum that integrates all the subject areas around particular themes. A key component of the multiage grouping is the use of cross-age and peer tutoring.

With the cooperation of the district and the principal, these classroom-level changes have been accompanied by school-level shifts meant to support the reform process. A vice principal's position has been eliminated and the funds used to support two new positions. The first is a .6 full-time-equivalent "coordinator of restructuring"—a teacher who now spends a portion of her day overseeing the change process. The second is a community liaison, who has dramatically increased the presence of parents and community members in the school.

Concurrently, and with the assistance of a local corporation, the school has created a Leadership Team made up of administrators, teachers, classified staff, and parents that monitors the restructuring process in the school, serves as a clearinghouse for concerns and ideas, and makes decisions about the future of the change process.

Not all reform stories involve such dramatic changes in school operations or practice. Our last portrait (Exhibit 3) is of a school swept rather reluctantly into state and district reform initiatives. The principal has been slow to relinquish control, leaving teachers frustrated in their attempts to move scarce resources to improve classroom conditions.

Exhibit 3

Slow Going: The Beginning of Change in Petersburg Elementary

Located in a relatively poor farming community, Petersburg Elementary serves fewer than 200 students with a staff of 8 teachers and a principal. Traditionally, the school has not been one of the most attractive to parents, and communication between the veteran principal of 20 years and the teachers has been strained.

Over the past year, the school has become involved in a state-initiated reform program that provides for school-based decision making, calls for curricular reforms, and imposes new assessment mechanisms. In addition, the school, at the district's request, joined a network of effective schools programs that offers technical assistance and training.

A number of changes have resulted from these reforms. Importantly, communication among teachers and between teachers and the principal has increased dramatically. There are now regular staff meetings, and a school council has been formed—a suggestion box has even been installed in the school. Moreover, as the result of the school needs assessment, a teachers' lounge has been constructed, a new bus lane has been paved, and the school has been cleaned and painted. The school council recently began to debate a new discipline policy.

For the teachers with whom we spoke, these changes have been important. For example, they have been seeking a room for teacher meetings for years; it has only been in the context of the new school council that action was taken. However, when it comes to more fundamental changes, there has been little movement. The teachers have entertained the idea of using funds freed up when a part-time librarian retires to support instructional aides in their classrooms. The idea was immediately vetoed by the principal. State-recommended shifts in classroom instruction, assessment, and multigraded classrooms have not moved forward here, either.

The experience, to date, at Petersburg Elementary illustrates that attempts to restructure schools do not always lead to extensive or promising organizational changes. The school did not transform as a result of its early efforts. Communication has improved, staff are thinking about ways of improving the school, and some cosmetic improvements have been made. Yet, there has been little effect (so far) on the fundamental organization of the school program, the authority relations, or classroom teaching practices.

Incidence of School-Based Reform

Given the variation across schools involved in reform activities, it is difficult to estimate how widespread such reforms are nationally. In our survey of a nationally representative sample of school districts during the 1990-91 school year, two-thirds of the districts reported having some type of school-based reform effort (see Figure 1), with large districts more likely than their small counterparts to indicate the existence of such reforms. According to the same district administrators, 55 percent of all schools (pre-kindergarten through grade 12) were attempting school-based reform programs (Figure 1).

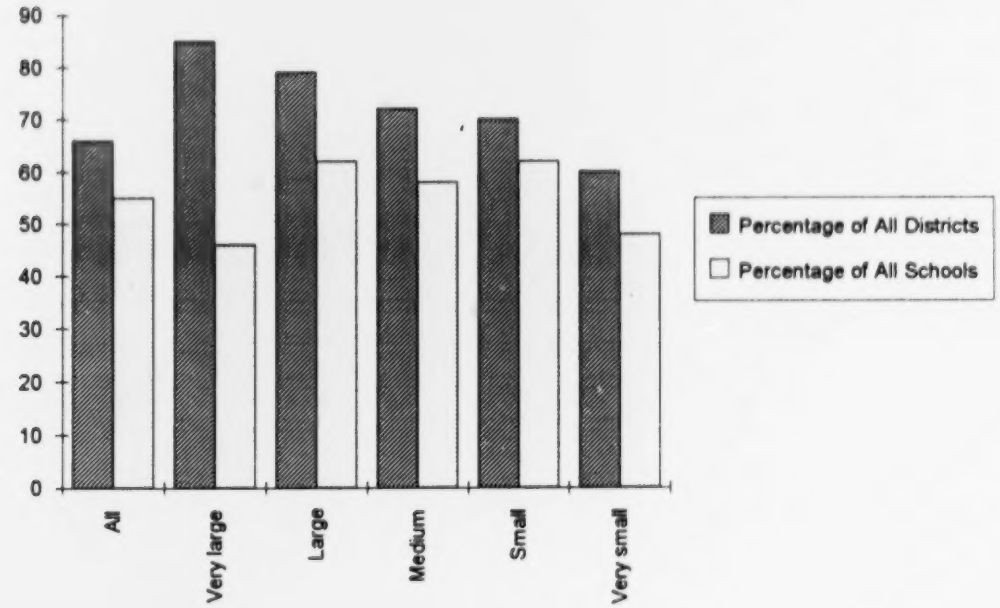


Figure reads: "66 percent of all districts reported that they had school-based reform programs...."

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 1 NATIONAL INCIDENCE OF SCHOOL-BASED REFORM, BY DISTRICT SIZE

These numbers should be read with caution, however. They are self-reported and probably overestimate the extent of true reform taking place nationally. To gauge reform efforts more accurately, we also asked administrators a series of questions about the most comprehensive school-based reform effort in their district. Using these data, we are able to get a sense of the range of reform efforts. For example, if we use the basic criteria that such efforts must simultaneously seek to raise achievement for all students, improve instruction, and promote school-level planning and problem solving, we find that only 40 percent of the districts nationwide report having such programs (Figure 2). Using the more stringent criterion that the reform effort must address the eight correlates of effective schools research (as defined by the 1988 federal Chapter 2 legislation), the percentage drops to 18 percent.

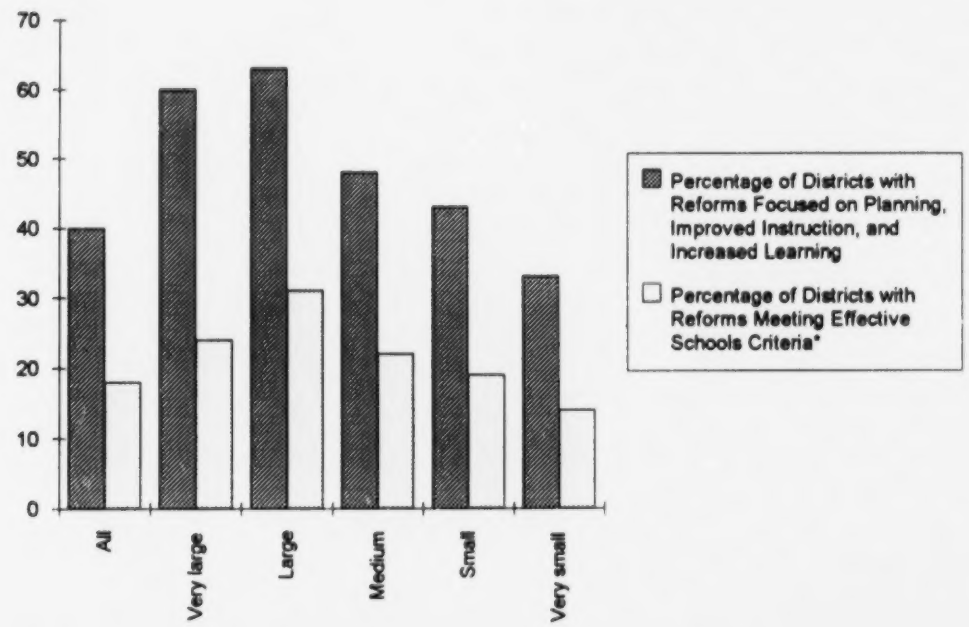


Figure reads: "40 percent of all districts reported that they had reform programs focusing on planning, improved instruction, and increased learning...."

* The effective schools criteria are: strengthening instructional leadership; promoting school-level planning; improving instruction; increasing achievement of all students (including disadvantaged); increasing acquisition of basic skills; increasing acquisition of higher-order skills; continuous assessment of students; increasing parent involvement.

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 2 INCIDENCE OF SCHOOL-BASED REFORM ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC CRITERIA, BY DISTRICT SIZE

These figures suggest that the more stringent the criteria we use, the fewer schools and districts are involved in reform. Still, even using these stricter definitions, the survey data indicate that school-based reform is relatively widespread, especially in the larger districts. The extent of reform activity probably reflects the increasing national focus on school-based reform during the late 1980s and early 1990s. We found that the majority of school-based reform programs were relatively new: nationally, only 15 percent of the districts reported having their current programs in place before 1988-89 (although it is possible that they had other programs in earlier years that are no longer operating) (Figure 3). More than half the programs were initiated between 1989 and 1991.

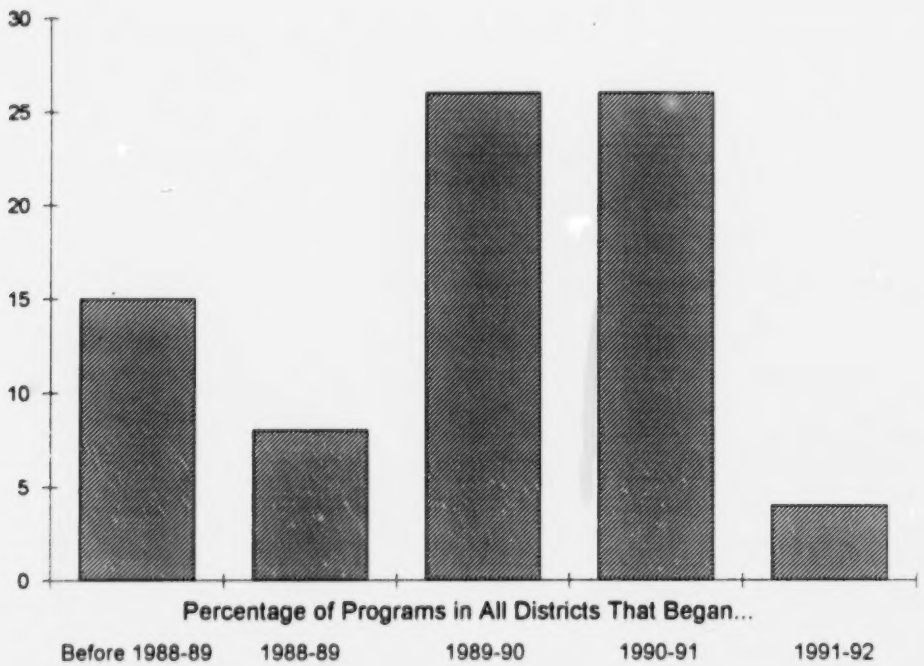


Figure reads: "In 15 percent of all districts, current school-based reform programs began before 1988-89...."

Percentages do not add to 100 because of missing data.

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 3 FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOL-BASED REFORM EFFORTS

Making Sense of the Variety of School-Based Reforms

The case study and survey data suggest that school-based reforms vary tremendously across districts and schools—for example, in longevity, breadth of focus, and extent of change in school organization and practice. Our data suggest that there are no pure "types" of reform—discrete packages into which any school's reform program can be easily sorted. One lesson we learned again and again in this study as we went into different schools is that labels such as "restructuring," "school-based management," and "effective schools programs" typically tell us little about what actually is taking place within a school—and by no means can capture the complexity of efforts to make changes in school organization and practice.

Similarly, we found no single dimension (e.g., good to bad, high to low) along which we can array each school's improvement efforts. Three considerations help to distinguish one reform effort from another—the degree to which the reform effort: (1) focuses on teaching and curriculum, (2) seeks to improve the professional culture of the school, and (3) provides opportunities for professional growth. For each of these dimensions, we describe the range of practices we found in our sample and provide specific examples.

Focus on Instruction

School improvement efforts do not necessarily focus on improvements at the classroom level. In fact, the national study found that nearly one in every five reform efforts focused on improving neither curriculum nor instruction, and fewer than half sought to improve both content and teaching (Figure 4). Such findings are hardly surprising because school staff involved in reform tend to focus first on process issues—such as forming new school teams or changing the decision-making process. They then often choose to tackle problems related to the physical quality of the learning environment, including making schools safe for children. In many cases, an initial focus on nonacademic issues such as these builds the foundation for the more difficult tasks of improving teaching and learning; in other instances, teachers and administrators are not able to get beyond efforts to change routines and decision-making patterns, and classrooms remain unchanged. The examples of South Mission High School and Petersburg Elementary illustrate these contrasting tendencies. At South Mission, an early focus on process issues quickly moved school staff to seek ways to improve classroom practice. In Petersburg, the staff remained stuck working out process-related problems.

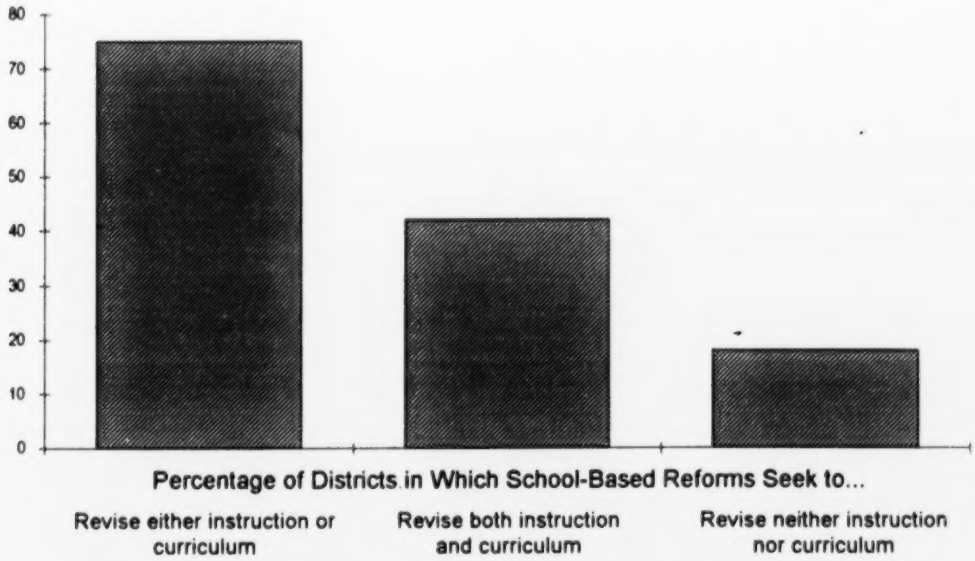


Figure reads: "In 75 percent of the districts with school-based reform efforts under way, the reform sought to revise either instruction or curriculum...."

Note: Percentages should not add to 100 because those districts that revise both curriculum and instruction are also counted as districts that revise either instruction or curriculum.

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 4 EXTENT TO WHICH REFORM STRATEGIES FOCUS ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Still, the majority of school-based-reform efforts nationally are seeking to improve what takes place in the classroom. When teachers and administrators did try to change classroom practice, their attempts typically focused on one or more of the following four areas: (1) expectations for student achievement, (2) pedagogy and content, (3) configurations of teachers, students, and the school day, (4) across the school day, ways of monitoring student progress. Site visits permit us to characterize the nature of these improvement attempts. Although there was considerable variation, some common themes emerged, as described below.

Expectations for Student Achievement—A goal of many schools we visited was to raise expectations for all students. In these schools, needs assessment showed that

students were achieving about as well as teachers expected them to and improvement in achievement, it was reasoned, must follow improvement in expectations. A common response by teachers in such instances was to communicate to students that they could and would acquire higher-order reasoning strategies and learn to think more critically about the subjects they were studying. Rather than regurgitating facts, students were expected to analyze phenomena, make comparisons, develop interpretations and conclusions, and evaluate issues. Such expectations emphasized the processes of solving problems and thinking critically rather than simply getting one right answer.

Pedagogy and Content—To provide students with opportunities to meet higher standards such as these, staff in a number of schools were rethinking their curriculum and instructional methods to make learning more interesting and challenging for students. In such schools, curricula tended to emphasize depth over breadth, often through interdisciplinary, integrated thematic units. These curricula also presented activities in which students applied concepts in "authentic" contexts. In a unit on local rivers and streams, for example, students interwove their study of science, mathematics, and social science as they measured pollutants; considered economic, environmental, and social costs of alternative solutions; and prepared recommendations for the water commission. Curricula such as these emphasized problem solving and critical thinking, often having students synthesize their inquiries in oral or written presentations.

Configurations of Teachers, Students, and the School Day—Along with new curricular approaches, staff in many schools we visited had rethought how students' and teachers' days were organized. In a number of schools we visited, block scheduling offered extended time periods—2 hours rather than the customary 40 minutes—in which students and teachers could approach the curriculum in greater depth. In many instances of block scheduling, teachers worked together in interdisciplinary teams. Often, students from two grades worked together. One school we visited, for example, was dividing its students into multiage "quads," where four teachers designated two rooms for an integrated thematic science curriculum and the other two rooms were reserved for technology and science labs.

Ways of Monitoring Student Progress—A key problem facing the teachers and administrators in the schools we visited was that, as they moved ahead with alternative curricula, they did so without appropriate test instruments to measure the expanded outcomes of the new curricula. Typically, the curricular changes they undertook called for, or implied the need for, some form of performance assessment, as well as frequent,

ongoing evidence of progress. Although the majority of the sites we visited had not yet obtained, designed, or implemented such assessments, some sites did have in place student assessments that differed from the traditional, standardized multiple-choice tests (see Exhibit 4). Writing portfolios were a common method of assessing performance in language arts, and in some cases portfolios were used in mathematics and science.

Exhibit 4

Alternative Approaches to Assessment

At Ross Primary, approximately 110 children were randomly selected to participate in a nongraded, multiage, developmentally appropriate primary program. Five staff members volunteered to teach in the pilot. The team is developing integrated thematic units, whole language units, and a curriculum monitoring/student assessment tool, the narrative or continuous progress record. The new report cards focus more on students' developmental progress. Students are assessed on component areas within each subject. Language arts includes reading and writing, listening (following oral directions and comprehending oral language), and speaking (expressing ideas in complete sentences and contributing to discussions). Social studies includes comprehension of the significance of selected events in history, identification of geographical concepts and facts, and demonstrated understanding of the individual's role in the family and community. Rather than letter grades based on an average of test scores, students are rated "E" as emerging, "P" for progressing, or "M" for mastering. Also noted on the report card are active participation in art, media, music, and physical education, and various indicators of social and emotional development such as a positive self-image, interaction with peers and adults, and adaptation to changes in school routine. There are sections for handwritten comments from the classroom teachers and other special-area teachers. Currently, the school is instituting a longitudinal portfolio that will gather a student's work over the course of 3 years.

Professional Culture of the School

Organized efforts to increase interaction and communication among school staff and administrators were a prominent feature of nearly all the school-based reform efforts we studied. Collegial collaboration, of course, is central to the thinking that underlies various restructuring and reform strategies, among them the effective schools model, which is based on research that shows that unusually effective schools are marked by productive communication and work among school staff members. School-based reform efforts vary, however, in the extent to which (1) such a "professional culture" has taken root, both formally and informally, and (2) staff has developed ownership of the change process.

Informal and Formal Arrangements for Encouraging Collegial Collaboration—In some cases, such collaboration is informal and unstructured—as in the example of Cicely Elementary School, described earlier. Here, much of the groundwork for reform in the school was laid by a set of eight teachers committed to new ways of teaching and learning. These teachers worked with other staff members informally to "spread the word." Commonly, attempts to bring teachers together are formalized in school-site councils or other formal arrangements. Such councils can give teachers more authority over important decisions. In most schools, however, teachers' decision-making authority was much more limited. For example, at South Mission, although teachers had an organized voice in the decision-making process, their input was considered solely as a recommendation to the principal, who had final say over all decisions.

Overall, we found that the mere existence of mechanisms to improve communication and collaboration among teachers does not guarantee that such involvement will take place. Petersburg Elementary (see Exhibit 3) is one instance where a school council now exists, but its teachers have been frustrated in their attempts to take on any meaningful issues in the school. In contrast, at Empire High School, a series of formal organizational changes, as well as personal commitment from teachers and administrators, has resulted in productive collaboration among school staff (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5

Flattening the Hierarchy at an Inner-City High School

Empire High School has made major changes in its administrative structure and instructional arrangements. By coordinating administration of both the high school and the middle school, administrative positions were reduced, and the remaining administrative posts were changed to facilitating "coordinators." Also, some administrative support staff were reassigned to help teachers with paperwork. This "flattened" hierarchy underscored the role of administrators as supportive of teachers and instruction, rather than as supervisory.

The reorganization of instructional arrangements has increased the joint work of teachers at Empire. Teacher teams work with two divisions of students. Four "core" teachers (math, science, English, and social studies), special teachers as needed, and rotating fine arts teachers work together and share a common planning period. "Macro scheduling," a form of block scheduling, will be implemented, with 2 hours of history and 2 hours of math each day, followed in the second semester by 2 hours of English and 2 hours of science.

Teacher involvement in school-based decision making appeared to reflect, in part, the extent to which districts devolved more authority to the school level, as reflected in the national survey data. As Figure 5 shows, more than half the districts engaged in reform activities have given schools more authority in the areas of staff development and selection of curriculum and materials, and 45 percent of districts have given schools more discretion over scheduling and student assessment; fewer than a third of the districts, however, have been willing to hand over authority in areas relating to budgeting and personnel actions.

Staff Ownership of the Change Process—The degree to which school staff felt as though they owned and controlled the change process was different from school to school. Ownership is an ambiguous concept, yet it was evident to us that in some schools, teachers felt as though they were undertaking new practices solely as the result of the decisions of others—for example, because of a district mandate for school involvement in a particular program. At the other extreme, we visited schools where the change process clearly reflected the ideas and vision of the teachers. In some instances, control rested at the school level, but in the hands of an administrator, not the teachers.

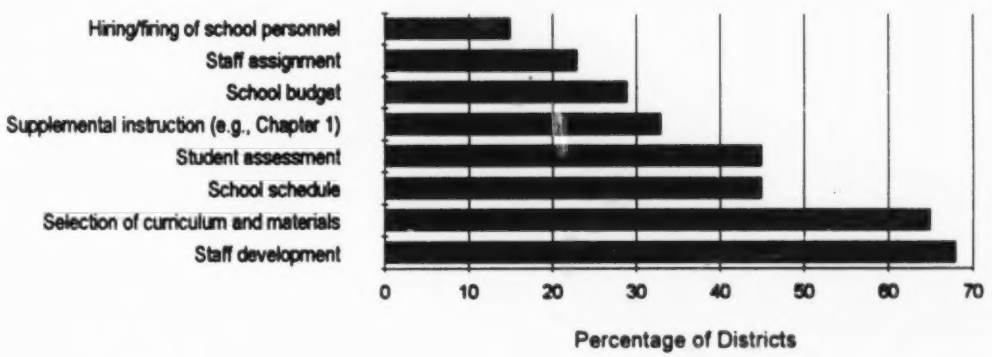


Figure reads: "68 percent of the districts with school-based reform provided schools authority to make decisions regarding staff development...."

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 5 AREAS IN WHICH DISTRICTS GRANT INCREASED AUTHORITY TO SCHOOLS

More typically, ownership of reform evolved over time, involving an internal struggle among school staff over competing visions of good practice and incorporating various outside pressures and ideas. Often, the initial impulse for the school-based reform came from the district or state, which established some kind of program or new policy aimed at school improvement. Over time, the reform came to be owned by a majority of school staff members. Sometimes, however, control and ownership of the reform process moved in the opposite direction, slowly slipping away from school staff. In one school we visited, which had served as an example of strong teacher control in the district, the principal had increasingly ignored teachers' concerns until the teachers chose to disband the school council rather than make decisions that were never implemented.

Opportunities for Professional Growth

In the schools we studied, participation in school-based reform created a new set of opportunities and challenges for school staff, which opened up unprecedented possibilities for professional growth and, at the same time, put demands on staff time that teachers were often unprepared to deal with. Learning about new approaches to curriculum design, instructional strategies, and student assessment—as well as about school budget allocations, management, and teacher hiring in some schools—asked a great deal of teachers. To deal with these new and varied demands, teachers and administrators typically needed to acquire new knowledge and skills—and, in fact, nationally, staff development is part of more than 8 in every 10 school-based reform efforts.

In some schools, especially where the professional culture did not support teacher collaboration, school staff became overwhelmed by the myriad demands of the reform process. Schools differed in the kinds of professional development opportunities offered to struggling teachers. Some schools held a series of traditional one-time workshops to address each new reform issue (e.g., a new approach to teaching writing; alternative assessment approaches), which provided some, but limited, assistance. Other schools took a more flexible and longer-term approach to addressing the need to build staff capacity. In these schools, staff planned coherent, sustained professional growth programs that provide access to the kinds of time and expertise necessary to acquire, implement, and reflect on new ways of teaching and learning. Such planning both broadened the definition of "expert" to include peers and colleagues and sought relevant expertise wherever it could be found (e.g., universities, other school districts). Schools with more extensive, sustained approaches to professional development differed from

others in terms of (1) their strategic perspective on professional growth, and (2) the expanded repertoire of professional development methods.

A Long-Term Perspective on Professional Growth—In the face of the many demands on staff created by externally or internally generated reform initiatives, it was difficult to assume an objective and long-term perspective on the reform itself or the kind of professional development it might require. In some of the schools we observed, school staff and members of the community found ways to step back and analyze the status of the school and identify the staff development opportunities they needed most for the areas targeted for significant change. Mechanisms for identifying staff development needs ranged from formal retreats, design teams, and surveys to informal, ongoing staff recommendations and ad hoc targets of opportunity (e.g., a state-sponsored pilot program). What seems to distinguish these schools from others is a strategic evaluation of school and staff development needs, available resources, and staff receptivity and capacity.

This strategic perspective was often accompanied by a longer-term view of the change process. Educators who held this view believed that professionals "develop" new skills and ways of working over a multiyear period. In schools where this view prevailed, professional development departed from the age-old "make and take" workshops covering a potpourri of "hot" topics and instead offered multiple sessions that explored a topic in depth. For example, elementary teachers in one school we visited attended successive staff development sessions on literature-based reading, writing about literature, writing in the content areas, cooperative learning, and methods for assessing student writing.

An Expanded Repertoire of Professional Development Methods—Whereas some schools settled for conventional presentational workshops, other schools we visited had jury-rigged an impressive array of methods for promoting teachers' professional growth. The methods differed from many traditional approaches in two important ways. First, they treated teachers as professionals who can contribute to their own as well as their peers' professional growth. Second, they were based on a vision of professional development that is ongoing and dynamic, designed to create a continuing capacity to meet unforeseen needs.

One example of such an approach is the creation of cadres of teacher leaders. To assure that all teachers in a school could have access to new ideas, some places identified leaders within the school who received training from outside experts and who then had responsibility for bringing the ideas back to the rest of the teachers in the school, as

illustrated in Exhibit 6. This strategy helped teachers help themselves and each other. Advice from colleagues who were actually using innovative approaches in their own classes is deemed more credible than exhortations from researchers.

Exhibit 6

Teachers as In-House Experts

At Sunset, the middle school reform efforts began with the principal's selecting five teachers to attend a summer institute on the middle school concept at an out-of-state institution of higher education. These five teachers returned with some of the skills and knowledge to begin leading the change effort. One of the changes implemented was the formation of the Program Improvement Council (PIC). The PIC is made up of administrators and teacher representatives and is the decision-making body of the school. The PIC empowers teachers and is an opportunity to build teacher leaders who go on and lead components of their school reform efforts.

Although the principal has since left, the original five teacher-leaders and new ones have continued guiding the reform efforts at their school. One of the original five is currently the school improvement coordinator. Another has been chairing the annual self-review team for a number of years. The team annually reviews the school on state quality criteria and makes recommendations for improvement. Funds received from the state school improvement program are an important resource for Sunset's change efforts.

A second approach to professional development fostered interaction between one school's teachers and colleagues from other schools already involved in similar reform efforts. For example, some schools and districts took the initiative to help teachers visit other schools that had already begun experimenting with new ideas. Observing innovations firsthand seems to overcome one of the shortcomings of workshops given by outside experts. Teachers frequently complained that presentations of theory, research, and recommendations seemed too abstract. For many teachers, "show me how it works" is the credibility test of a new approach.

A third approach was to build nontraditional relationships with traditional providers of professional development. For example, one school we visited has developed a close working relationship with the local university; professors served on the design team, charged with planning the school's restructuring. The university and school have formed a partnership that includes on-site teacher preparation for university students and on-site inservice for teachers at the school site.

Summing Up: Promising School-Based Reform Efforts

School-based reform, thus, has many meanings. Reform in some schools meant little more than a shift in the way school staff interacted with one another, reflecting either the lack of ambitious or clear goals or simply the fact that the reforms were only just getting under way. Regardless, in these cases, the reforms had few effects on staff and students. But in other sites, school-based reform had clearly brought fundamental changes to the daily lives of people in schools. In these cases, reforms have both offered school staff opportunities for professional growth and made increasing demands on their time, skills, and knowledge.

One wishes for concrete and convincing evidence that what is taking place in such schools has improved the learning and future prospects of schoolchildren. Apart from occasional, fragmentary evidence, we have no defensible way of demonstrating such outcomes because of the lack of appropriate measures, the recency of these reform efforts, and the limitations of our study design. Short of satisfactory evidence regarding the pay-off of reforms for students, what can be said about the promise of reform efforts amidst the variety of school-based interventions that go by that name? We can offer several observations about the attributes of "promising" school-based reform efforts.

First, reforms that focus on the classroom—on curriculum, teaching, and learning—have more **immediate** promise than those that don't, for obvious reasons. On the basis of a growing body of literature that suggests the efficacy of academically challenging instruction in high-poverty classrooms and elsewhere (e.g., Means, Chelemer, & Knapp, 1991; Knapp et al., 1992), we would also assert that reforms that are pushing toward practices that expect more of learners are headed in the right direction. Examples of such instruction include "meaning-oriented" instruction in mathematics and literacy at the elementary level (see Knapp et al., 1992) and in a range of subjects at the secondary level (see McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). To the extent that high academic expectations are framed with the full range of students in mind, so much the better.

Second, schools that develop and sustain a collaborative professional culture over time appear to have a greater chance of addressing all students' needs in a cumulative way. Short-term enthusiasm followed by burnout and retrenchment is an ever-present possibility in school-based reform attempts. We, therefore, find reforms with some demonstrable longevity to offer more hope of ultimate success.

Third, schools that make maximum effort to develop professional capacities—specific to both the classroom and the school as professional workplaces—offer greater potential for bringing about changes that serve children effectively. To be sure, no school we studied exhibited all three attributes equally strongly. But it was readily apparent among those schools we visited that some had made little headway in all three areas, while others were strong in one or two, if not in all three. We therefore take these attributes as proximate indicators of school-based reforms that are likely (though not certain) to benefit students and schooling.

III HOW SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS CREATE CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT SCHOOL-BASED REFORM

The course of educational change necessarily is directed by the teachers and administrators who work within the walls of the school building. The prospects for reform turn on the ability of school staff to develop sufficient capacity and willingness to change the process of teaching and learning and their traditional patterns of authority and interaction. Yet, schools do not exist in a vacuum; they must negotiate their efforts with the outside world—districts, states, and local communities. To garner the needed support to advance their reform efforts, school staff must make use of resources outside of the school building. As such, school-based reform hinges not only on the school itself, but also on the district, which can play a key role in helping schools to overcome the barriers to change and to take advantage of external support.

Thus, schools and districts can work together to control a number of basic conditions that nurture school-based reform efforts. The following areas, in which district and school exercise joint control, all play a part in fostering promising school-based reform efforts:

- Providing strong leadership for school-based reform.
- Influencing who is in the school.
- Providing professional development opportunities.
- Building school staff support for reform goals.
- Garnering resources.
- Assessing and sharing information about school performance.
- Developing parental and community support.

Other conditions supporting school-based reform are controlled primarily by the district, in particular:

- Setting and waiving requirements.
- Managing forces and conditions outside the school's control.

In this chapter, we review what we learned about each area.

Joint Actions by District and School

Most actions that district administrators can take to support school-based reform involve coordination and partnership with school staff. Such actions range from providing leadership for reform efforts to helping to secure community and parental support.

Providing Strong Leadership for School-Based Reform

The primary leadership for school-based reform can originate at either the school or district level, or even at both levels simultaneously. Approximately three-fifths of the districts nationwide (58 percent) reported that the leader who initiated the most comprehensive school-based reform program in the district resided at the district level, compared with approximately two-fifths (38 percent) in which this leader resided at the school level (Figure 6). What is more, district-level staff maintain an active leadership role in the ongoing operation of school-based reforms in a surprisingly large number of districts. In a quarter of all districts, the day-to-day coordination of the most comprehensive school reform program resided at the district level as well.

The story, however, is often more mixed—that is, in some respects, school-based reform is driven simultaneously by school and district forces. Also, in many instances, reforms guided initially from one level are gradually assumed by another, as in cases where a district-level initiative was "taken over" at the school level or in the occasional instances in which school reforms initiated by individual schools became the seeds of a subsequent districtwide reform thrust.

Several broad patterns can be discerned in the ways districts provide support for school-based reform. The patterns reflect different resolutions of basic questions about governance, authority, and leadership. Each pattern can work for or against reform at the school level, depending on the fit between what the district does and what the school is trying to accomplish.

We found four types of district support at work in our sample:

(1) "Vision at the Top" leadership involves key individuals at the central office providing the initial catalyst, as well as ongoing intellectual and operational leadership, for the efforts of school people to reform their schools (see Exhibit 7).

(2) "Behind-the-Scenes Support" leadership entails district leaders "planting seeds" for reform and facilitating individual schools' efforts to develop and implement a school-based reform initiative rather than leaders possessing or articulating a

strong view of reform themselves. In districts exemplifying this pattern, the leadership typically places great importance on school staffs' generating reform plans in which they have a high degree of ownership.

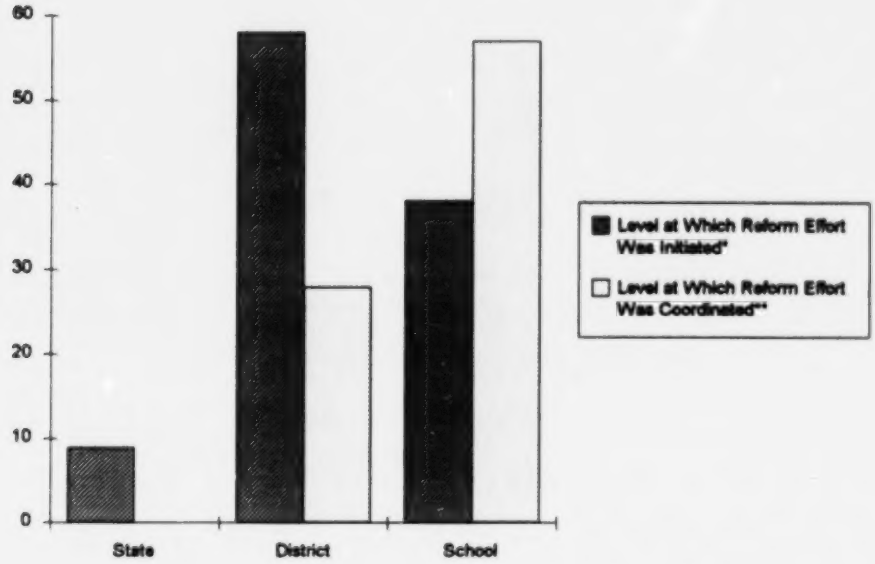


Figure reads: "Of all the districts that had school-based reform, 9 percent reported that the reform efforts were initiated at the state level...."

* Percentages sum to more than 100 because, in some districts, responsibility for initiating the reform effort was taken by persons at more than one level of the system.

** Percentages do not sum to 100 because of missing or erroneous data and "Other" responses.

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 6 RELATIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF STATE, DISTRICT, AND SCHOOL STAFF IN INITIATING AND COORDINATING SCHOOL-BASED REFORM (Percentage of Districts)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(3) "Conduit for External Reform Ideas" refers to situations where district leaders have a less clear picture of the kinds of reform they would like to see in their schools, but they find themselves being pushed in certain directions by the state or other external groups, most notably the community. Typically, in such instances, the district accepts the vision from the outside and seeks to implement it by passing along requirements and resources, often interpreting or adapting them in the process.

(4) "Laissez-Faire Support" occurs through district-level inattention to reform issues, or a permissive philosophy that encourages school-level initiatives of all kinds, or even a combination of the two. Here, the district leaders choose not to take a position on, or to provide active support for, school-based reform. Simultaneously, by design or default, they stay out of the way of those at the school level who wish to engage in reform activity.

Exhibit 7

District or School as Driving Force for Reform

South Mission Unified School District exemplifies strong visionary leadership at the district level guiding school-based reform. In this medium-sized suburban district, the superintendent brought to his position strong convictions and a degree of experience with the effective schools process. One of his initial actions was to have all central office administrators and board members trained in this process. Subsequently, the process and ideas about mastery learning were introduced to all schools, and school staffs were extensively exposed to the correlates of effective schooling espoused by this vision. School councils and correlate committees were promptly formed and have remained in place over the past 4 years. The superintendent and district staff maintain an active presence in each school through continuing refresher training and requirements that keep schools focused on instructional leadership (e.g., the requirement that principals observe each teacher eight times a year).

Thus, the district can play many roles in leading school-based reform. However, leadership emanating only from the district is not sufficient to sustain reform efforts. In fact, the single most important condition supporting meaningful school reform was the presence of effective leadership *at the school level*. The degree to which any improvement effort could be initiated and sustained over time turned, to a great extent, on the quality of school-level leadership.

Two kinds of leadership were generally present in schools whose reforms had progressed the farthest and demonstrated the greatest promise—catalytic leadership and

sustaining leadership (see Exhibit 8). Catalytic leadership refers to activities that caused the staff to develop a shared vision of where the school was headed and that motivated staff to take the risks of adopting new approaches to their work. Such leaders were generally viewed as dynamic individuals, who provided the initial "push" necessary to initiate the reform process, to build shared commitment, and to marshal resources in such a way that the reform process gets under way. Sustaining leadership described school leaders who could facilitate, motivate, and otherwise support those who are engaged in implementing reform initiatives over the long haul. Here, the school leaders offered a less dynamic, more supportive presence that nurtured the staff and encouraged shared ownership of reform ideas. The key to sustaining reform seemed to be to include school staff in discussions about key school-level issues and to provide staff with more authority for what took place in their own classrooms.

Exhibit 8

Catalytic and Sustaining Leadership at the School Level

The difference between catalytic and sustaining leadership was exemplified in one elementary school. Here, a dynamic principal came to the school in the mid-1980s and, driven by what some teachers described as "moral outrage," set on a course to improve the school. The principal galvanized the staff around the issue of low student test scores. Together, the principal and the staff were continually trying different strategies and approaches, and the school was in a constant state of flux. Finally, a course of reform was decided on and a plan of action devised, at which point the principal left.

The subsequent principal, with a very different leadership style, took over the implementation of the reform program. The second principal took a much lower-key approach to change. She made fewer demands on staff time and generally went out of her way to attend to the needs of the staff. Her commitment to the program was high, but she worked hard to create a climate in which everyone could accomplish the school's vision with less stress. Staff, even those who were on board when the first principal provided the initial "catalyzing" leadership that led to the reforms, acknowledge that the present principal has brought much-needed stability to the school.

Influencing Who Is in the School

District assignment and transfer policies, not to mention personnel selection criteria and process, have a great deal to do with the cast of characters present in each school-based reform effort. Given the importance of catalytic leadership early in the reform effort

and the higher-than-normal demands placed on school staffs, actions that place the right kinds of people in schools seem to have a good deal to do with the prospects that school-based reform efforts will get off the ground.

In district-driven reform cases, the central office is more likely to play a directive role in personnel assignment and selection. In school-driven instances, the district is more likely to grant discretion to the school site over hiring. But, regardless of the locus of leadership, the district is the entity responsible for initial selection and placement of principals.

With regard to teachers and special program staff, school leaders engaged in school-based reform typically want some discretion over hiring and often would prefer complete control. The national survey data made clear that, on average, districts are reluctant to cede this kind of control to schools, although there is some variation across districts of different sizes, especially with regard to staff assignments (Figure 7). Surprisingly, according to national survey data, larger districts are much more likely than smaller ones to grant greater authority to schools over staff assignments.

Providing Professional Development Opportunities

The presence of capable leadership can go only so far to sustain reform efforts. The long-term improvement of a school depends on the ability of all (or most) school staff to improve their own work. Such change generally requires staff to learn new ways of interacting with one another and with students. Consequently, massive and continuing professional development is central to the sustainability of school-based reform and its likelihood of affecting actual classroom practice.

To sustain school-based reform that improves classroom practice, school staffs need to enhance and improve what takes place in the classroom. For example, we found that making the kind of changes associated with the adoption of curricula oriented toward critical thinking required teachers to acquire skills that were quite different from those learned in their original teaching. In schools that had developed the most promising school reforms, significant attention had been given to ensuring that teachers had access to the knowledge required to make these changes.

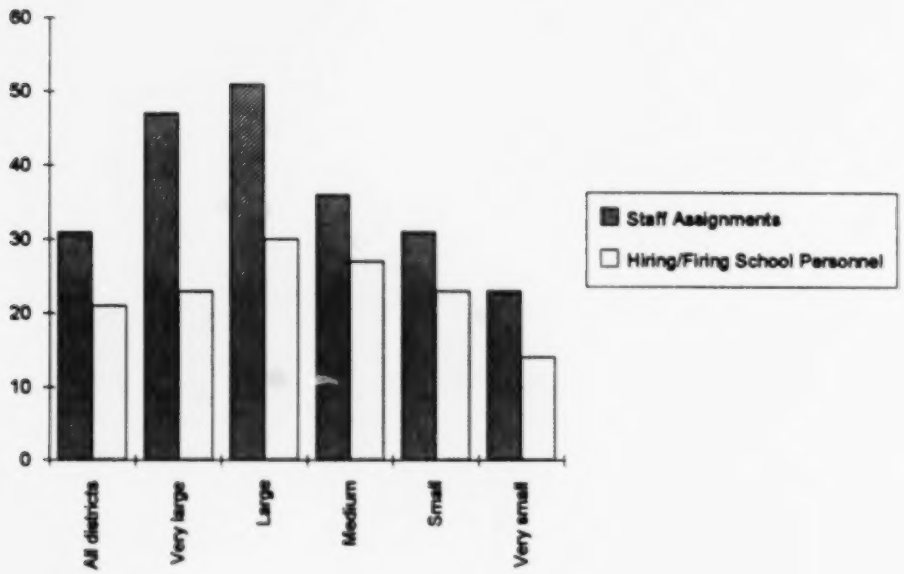


Figure reads: "Of all districts in which greater authority over personnel matters was granted to schools engaged in reform, 31 percent granted more authority over staff assignments...."

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 7 AUTHORITY GRANTED TO SCHOOLS OVER STAFF ASSIGNMENT AND HIRING, BY DISTRICT SIZE (Percentage of Districts)

In schools undergoing reforms, we found school staff seeking to develop new knowledge and skills about the process of change, in addition to teaching and curriculum (see Exhibit 9). Specific knowledge and skills about the process of change were not a precondition for the initiation of school-based reform in the schools we studied. Yet, if staff did not develop such skills in the reform's early stages, it was difficult for them to develop a high degree of collegiality and to engage in collaborative work.

Exhibit 9

Knowledge of the Change Process

An elementary school in an agricultural community illustrates how building the staff's abilities to work together, solve problems, and make decisions provided the foundation for change. Two years ago, the staff went through training in shared decision making that resulted in the teachers' assuming responsibility for making all the decisions that affect them. Not only did they make all the decisions about curriculum and instruction, they also hired new teachers. When staff meetings were held, grade-level teams rather than administrators took responsibility for running the meeting, and staff members, including the principals, had to sign up to speak. One teacher commented that the meetings were run very effectively; if speakers went beyond the time allotted to them, a buzzer went off and they had to stop. Despite the use of a buzzer to control time, several staff members stated that meetings were enjoyable and productive.

School staff are obviously limited in the amount of staff development they can provide themselves—although collaboratively organized schools do allow teachers to learn from one another, as we noted in the preceding chapter. Overall, however, the district is the most important provider, convener, or facilitator of the professional development opportunities teachers need to meet the challenges of school improvement. The district can play various roles in providing professional development support, but it need not be the only trainer or the one that defines what is to be done. Some alternative patterns of professional development are:

- **The professional development center.** One district exemplified this approach to professional development assistance by creating a "professional development academy" with the aid of outside foundation funding.
- **Expert trainer.** A less ambitious variation on the theme of the professional development center occurred in instances where the district staff development director or others at the central office possessed expertise in areas related to the school-based reform effort.
- **Definer of a menu of professional development options.** The district might not possess the expertise required to provide staff development directly, but instead define a series of acceptable options for staff development, as in several cases we studied.
- **Professional development broker.** Rather than set out a menu of possibilities, the district could act as an intermediary between schools and outside experts or other sources, such as professional societies or universities.

- **Source of professional development resources.** The district is also one source of funds to support staff development activities devised by the schools, and it simply provides the wherewithal for school people to arrange for their own professional development.

Whatever their role in staff development, districts contributed to promising school-based reforms when their efforts enabled school people to acquire skills, knowledge, and ideas that were tailored to the particular school-based reforms in which they were engaged.

Building School Staff Support for Reform Goals

Districts may predispose school staff to tackle particular reform goals. Among the districts we studied intensively, the following district actions had the effect of setting or directing school people toward specific goals:

- Making pronouncements (e.g., by issuing district mission statements that emphasized school-based reform).
- Developing a districtwide goal-setting process (e.g., by setting up task forces with heavy representation by school people and a mandate to consider goals that related to school-level reform).
- Setting assessment targets (e.g., by insisting that school performance reach a particular standard).
- Controlling the flow of reform ideas into the district (e.g., by inviting particular kinds of speakers whose ideas emphasized one or another approach to school-based reform).
- Reinforcing external goals for school reform (e.g., by translating state reform provisions into terms that applied to schools).

Such steps brought reform goals to the attention of school staff and gave the reforms legitimacy. However, the actual implementation of reform and the maintenance of change effects called for a fair degree of staff ownership. In turn, ownership reflected the degree to which the staff had a meaningful role in determining what the reforms would be. In the most promising examples of reform, schools had established a structure and process for involving staff in the decision-making process such that teachers believed they could raise any issue for consideration. Beyond bolstering teachers' capacity to question the school's daily operations, empowerment also involved the authority and responsibility to participate in key decisions. In such schools, the principal remained the primary decision maker, but teachers had an active role in the decision-making process.

Garnering Resources

Schools trying to put new reforms in place often needed some additional resources—time for teachers to plan, access to staff development opportunities, and new materials. Generally, these resources could be obtained through increased funds, and, in fact, many of the schools we visited that had moved far in putting reforms in place had access to additional money. Some of the schools were involved in state-funded programs that provided them with substantial supplementary resources. More typically, schools received relatively small grants as part of some state or local reform efforts. And in many cases, no extra funds were available to schools at all. A few of the schools we visited received outside funds from private sources.

Because school-based reform efforts call for additional resources, greater discretion by school people over the use of resources, or both, the financial health of the district, the availability of discretionary resources at the district level, and the district's policies regarding school-level budgeting are intimately involved in the story of reform. The district can play various roles in this regard. Among the districts we studied intensively, we encountered districts contributing resources to school-based reform efforts in a variety of ways, among them:

- Creating special programs targeted to schoolwide improvement efforts of various kinds.
- Helping schools secure external grant funding from the state, foundations, or private-sector firms.
- Reallocating resources in the overall district budget to provide greater assistance to school-level reform efforts.
- Transferring budgetary authority to schools to make it easier for them to concentrate resources on key reform goals.

Assessing and Sharing Information about School Performance

To make sure that reforms are having the intended effects, school staff need information to help them track their progress in relation to their goals. The nature of the data that schools reviewed varied widely but typically included some information about student progress (e.g., test scores, disciplinary rates) and about stakeholders' perceptions of how well the school was doing. Although such information did not ever constitute a full evaluation of any school's reform effort, the information enabled staff to engage in an

informed discussion about their progress and about what was needed to continue the process of improvement.

Districts often play a key role in helping school staff to obtain and analyze these data. Districts typically control student testing and can provide the technical capacity schools often lack to analyze test scores.

Developing Parental and Community Support

In many of the schools that had been able to sustain school-based reform, there was evidence that efforts were under way to actively involve the parents and the community, generally with the support, if not direct assistance, of the district. This involvement manifested itself in a variety of ways. At some sites, these stakeholders participated directly in the governance of the school by serving on design teams or decision-making teams. More often, parents played a more limited role in school governance but were substantially involved in the school in other kinds of ways, such as participating in classes for parents and helping their children with homework.

Actions Taken Primarily by the District

Because of its legal and political position of overseeing education across schools, the district holds at least two unique responsibilities in promoting reform.

Setting and Waiving Requirements

School-based reform typically involves a balance between top-down and bottom-up control of the change process. Often, the reform agenda is advanced when districts provide schools with greater flexibility and authority over key decisions and, subsequently, when principals share authority with teachers. Yet, district requirements (which may be a reinterpretation of requirements emanating from the state or federal level) can also encourage school improvement by stimulating school staff to consider changes and by guiding the direction of those changes.

District requirements affect many facets of school life, but at least the following four are central to most of the school-based reform efforts we studied: instructional planning, curriculum design, assessment (or evaluation), and accountability. The districts we studied used requirements as a strategic tool in support of school-based reform in two broad ways. Either they required new things of the schools—a more detailed long-range

improvement plan, a particular change in curriculum, an expanded form of instructional supervision—or they freed schools from requirements—for example, by waiving normal school scheduling regulations, allowing greater latitude in the use of school specialists, or exempting schools from using district-approved textbook series. Generally speaking, districts emphasized one or another of these, depending on whether the reform process was primarily district driven or school driven. In district-driven sites, new requirements were a tool to get school staffs to engage more actively with reforms. In school-driven sites, districts tended more to grant waivers or to find other ways of releasing schools from what were often interpreted as unnecessary or counterproductive requirements.

Perhaps as a reflection of the greater variation among the schools within the district or the greater number of requirements in these settings, larger districts were much more likely than smaller ones to report that they granted waivers to schools engaged in school-based reform (Figure 8). Among those that did grant waivers, not all waivers concerned requirements that originated from the central office; they also might have to do with union contract stipulations or the dictates of the state education agency (Figure 9). The latter were especially noticeable; nearly half of districts in all size categories granted or helped districts obtain waivers from requirements originating at the state level. The pattern in the survey data can also be a reflection of the formalized role that requirements play in larger, more bureaucratized school districts. In smaller districts, permission to deviate from district requirements can be much more informal and be handled through verbal interactions rather than an official waiver.

Managing Forces and Conditions Outside the School's Control

By formal responsibility and position, the district stands between the school and various potentially powerful groups outside the school representing other schools and educators in the district, advocating the interests of certain community segments, or making policy at the regional or state level. In particular, the local teachers' union, advocacy groups and business interests in the local community, and the state education agency are likely to exert various pressures, both positive and negative, on school-based reform efforts. Whether they want to or not, district officials are forced to mediate between school-based reformers and these various groups. The way in which the district carries out its mediating role has a great deal to do with the ability of school-based reform efforts to thrive and be sustained.

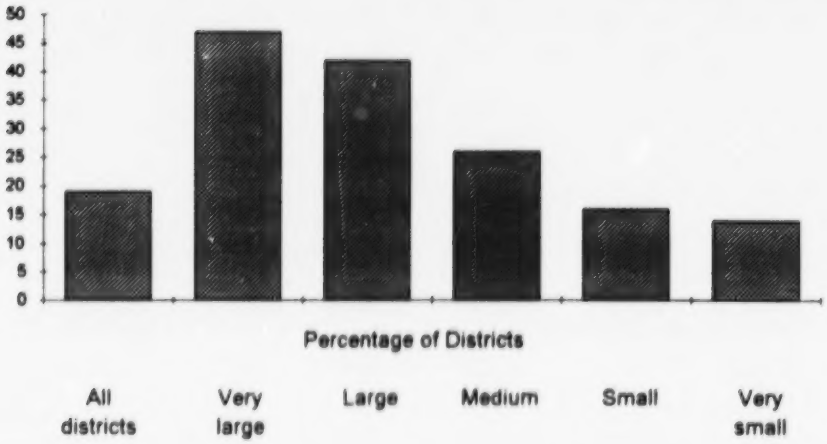


Figure reads: "Of all districts with school-based reform, 19 percent reported granting waivers to schools engaged in reform activities...."

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 8 DISTRICT WAIVERS FOR SCHOOLS ENGAGED IN REFORMS, BY DISTRICT SIZE

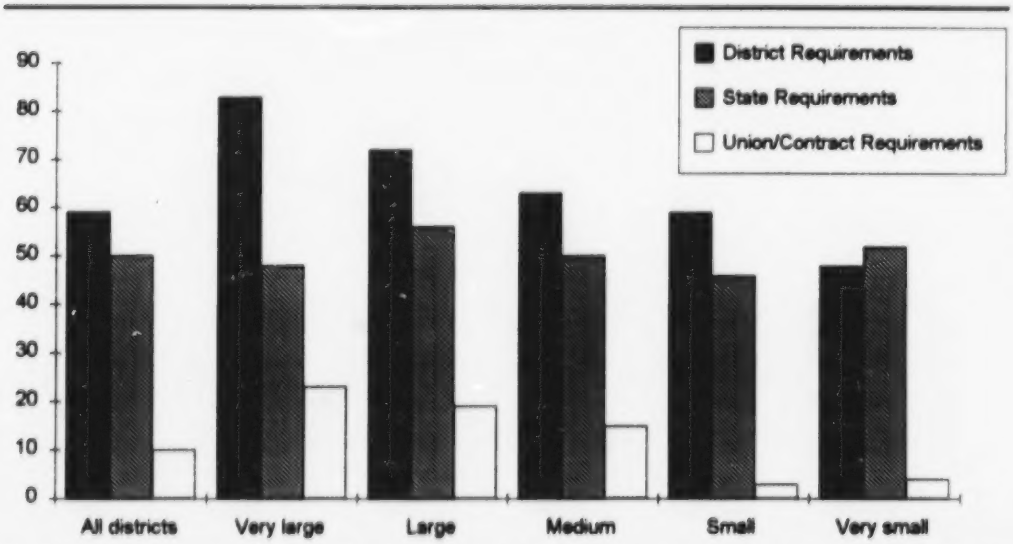


Figure reads: "Of all districts with school-based reform that granted waivers to schools engaged in reform, 59 percent reported granting waivers from district requirements...."

Source: District survey.

FIGURE 9 TYPES OF WAIVERS GRANTED SCHOOLS ENGAGED IN REFORM, BY DISTRICT SIZE

"Managing" external forces and conditions includes a variety of roles: buffering school people from the outside world, interpreting and adapting the demands of the outside to make them more useful for the schools, and cultivating outside groups for the advantage of schools.

Summing Up: The School and District Working Together

Our findings suggest that both districts and schools are consequential actors in school-based reform. Some conditions present in the most promising cases of reform are controlled primarily by the district (e.g., setting and waiving requirements and managing forces and conditions outside the school's control). However, most conditions arise from a combination of district and school actions. The school serves as the location for change, and school staff ultimately must carry out the changes. The district, however, can provide resources and support necessary to help sustain the reform effort.

There is no one role for districts to play that maximizes the chances of encouraging promising reforms to take hold. Rather, our analyses suggest that the optimal form of district support depends on the fit between district- and school-level visions of reform and on the resolution of the inevitable authority issues that are involved. On balance, the odds of sustaining promising school-based reform over the long term are probably better in districts that assume an active role in support of these reforms.

However, the roles of the district and the school change over time. Catalyzing reform efforts requires different resources than sustaining those efforts. Although the initial spark for reform may come from the district level, school-level staff must eventually adopt the changes as their own for the reform to be long-lasting. Thus, the district and the school provide the support each is capable of providing, while continually renegotiating their roles to ensure that the reform can be sustained over time.

IV STATE AND FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL-BASED REFORM

Through leadership, funding patterns, and myriad policy decisions, state governments define, to a great extent, what schools can and cannot do. We focus in this section on how state policies facilitate the progress of bottom-up reform efforts. We begin with two portraits of state-sponsored reform efforts, contrasting the local control approach of Washington State with the more aggressive stance of California. Then, looking across the five states we studied (South Dakota, Connecticut, and Kentucky, as well as Washington and California), we describe what states are doing to support reform. We conclude with a discussion of the federal role.

Portraits of State Support for School-Based Reform

We present the contrasting cases of California and Washington (Exhibits 10 and 11). In California, the state has a long history of promoting school reform and of taking aggressive steps to ensure that reforms are put in place at the local level. With its history of local control, Washington has taken a much more "hands-off" approach to promoting local change efforts.

Within these two contexts, we witness remarkable differences in their approaches to promoting reform. The lesson from this study is that one state's approach cannot be compared directly with that of another. The appropriate state role is defined in large part by the state's political and resource context.

What States Are Doing to Support School-Based Reform

Across the five states we visited, we found common strategies—pursued somewhat differently—that affect the willingness and ability of local educators to move forward with reform efforts. States attempt to lead reform by setting challenging goals, establishing appropriate authority relationships, providing needed technical assistance and professional development, financing local reforms, and establishing accountability mechanisms.

Exhibit 10

California: Combining Challenging Curriculum and School Autonomy in Pursuit of Reform

California has long been among the leading states in adopting innovative practices, as reflected in its championing of compensatory education in the early 1960s, its commitment to school-based decision making in the 1970s, and its development of trend-setting curricular frameworks in the 1980s. A state with an extremely diverse and growing student population, California has managed to maintain a focus on school-based reform.

The cornerstone of California's reforms has been a content-driven approach to school improvement. Between the state curricular frameworks, the guides to implementing those frameworks, the state's instructional material adoption policies, and its active network of professional development projects, reform in California has focused first on improving what takes place in the classroom between students and teachers.

A parallel development has been two state efforts to promote greater school-level decision making. The first is the state school improvement program, which provides each elementary school and a majority of secondary schools with discretionary dollars ($30 to $107 per student per year) for reform activities. As a condition of receiving the funds, schools agree to form representative school councils that decide how the funds are to be spent. Schools also agree to nonpunitive reviews of their programs' quality conducted by peers from neighboring districts. More recently, the state has begun a demonstration program that provides 210 schools with grants to restructure their schools. The goal is to free schools from unnecessary state regulation and promote innovative experimentation and reorganization of teaching and learning.

From the local perspective, the state provides clear, if sometimes heavy-handed, leadership while offering a series of resources that could be used flexibly to address local priorities, particularly in the areas of curriculum and instruction. In California, expertise and technical support have been used to instigate and facilitate local reform efforts. The state has tried to unify a multifaceted reform strategy by exerting strong content-oriented state leadership and simultaneously encouraging more school-level innovation.

Exhibit 11

Washington: Promoting Local Ownership of the Reform Process

Washington State, with its history of local control, represents another approach for supporting school-based reform: a visible demonstration program that maximizes local discretion. The program, called Schools for the 21st Century, reinforces this tradition by putting resources in the hands of local educators to enable them to pursue promising restructuring agendas. The state education department has not attempted to guide this process, but instead tries to facilitate local change priorities. The Schools for the 21st Century program makes 6-year restructuring grants and helps waive state and local regulations that may stand in the way of local reform.

Schools for the 21st Century is administered by its own unit in the state department in conjunction with the state board of education. Thirty-three grants have been made to districts, subparts of districts, and schools. School year 1991-92 was the fourth year of implementation for local grant recipients. Other than favoring proposals that demonstrated widespread buy-in by teachers, administrators, and parents, the state has intentionally refrained from specifying reform goals and visions of desirable practice. Rather, the state has issued a call for good, innovative ideas, arguing that interesting problem-solving experiments at school sites are especially likely to be helpful to other schools in Washington.

The grants enable the 111 participating schools (in 29 districts) to lengthen the school year and provide additional planning and professional development time for teachers. Grant recipients can also obtain waivers from certain state requirements. Most participating schools receive a discretionary account of approximately $50,000 per year. Following a statewide trend toward Outcome-Based Education, about half of the 21st Century grant recipients we visited are implementing curricular changes of this type. Again, the state has not put preconditions on the content or direction of local 21st Century pilots, so there are other schools that are focusing on noncurricular improvements as well.

Washington has linked its principal reform to the local-control tradition of the state's school system. The state has made a commitment to field-based experiments and innovations. It is interesting that this early example of state support through direct grants recognizes the need for staff time to come up with promising reform strategies at the school level.

Setting Goals for Student Learning

States can play a powerful leadership role in promoting reform by setting clear and challenging student learning goals. Connecticut's Common Core of Learning illustrates one approach to setting overall student learning goals. The Common Core is neither a

mandate nor a curriculum, but rather a "comprehensive vision of what a high school graduate should know" (Connecticut State Board of Education, 1987). Connecticut has used the Common Core in various ways to guide local reform, including developing new assessment instruments aligned with its goals.

California's curricular frameworks represent another approach to goal setting. The frameworks explicitly address the skills students will need in a particular subject area to move on to further education and/or careers after high school. They do not mandate what teachers teach, but rather are meant to represent a road map for teachers to create more challenging learning experiences for students. At the same time, the state uses the frameworks to assess instructional materials, and schools can be reimbursed only for materials formally approved by the state.

In the absence of specified learning goals, local educators can find themselves floundering and unable to anchor their reforms to specific targets. Staff in a number of Washington's Schools for the 21st Century argued that they did not have sufficient direction from the state regarding their reform efforts. Similarly, a number of teachers in Kentucky found the state's learning goals and valued outcomes to be too broad in the absence of curricular frameworks, which had yet to be developed during our visit.

Balancing Authority Relationships

A major dilemma facing states is how to balance their leadership role, in which they seek to push schools along the reform path, with a need to provide schools with sufficient autonomy to devise reforms that reflect local conditions and needs. Who should control the reform process? Kentucky offers the more far-reaching example of moving control of the change process closest to the school level. The state reform law (KERA) mandates that each school have an elected school council by 1996 and that these councils have control over a variety of key decisions, including, for example, certain budgetary expenditures and curricular emphases.

Connecticut, which has both a traditional effective schools program and a comprehensive reform agenda that integrates curriculum with assessment, manages to keep the state at the forefront of reform with very little control over districts or schools. Here, the effective schools process set the stage early on for school-level decision making. State staff who serve as effective-schools facilitators work directly with school staff, not district staff. The structure of the process has given school staff experience and expertise

in identifying their problems and solving them. Every reform initiative in Connecticut has been planned and developed with the involvement of school staff, district staff, teacher preparation institutions, and parents. This state's local tradition, reinforced by thoughtful policy making on the part of the state agency, has carried it through a full decade of tumultuous educational reform.

Interestingly, in states such as South Dakota, with long histories of local control, there may be less need for the state to take extraordinary steps to provide schools and districts with more autonomy. In these cases, the schools already had sufficient freedom to move forward with changes of their own making.

Providing Technical Assistance and Professional Development

Local educators attempting to improve their schools are typically confronted with a series of tasks for which they have little or no preparation, thereby creating a demand for significant technical assistance and professional development opportunities. In general, we found that states recognize these needs. The support involved in a school's participation in Connecticut's effective schools process is perhaps the most comprehensive example we encountered. Here state staff are assigned to a school and (1) help the school to form a planning team, (2) provide the team with training in schoolwide planning, (3) administer needs assessment surveys and provide the school with an analysis of the data, (4) sponsor a "planning institute" to help the team devise strategies for addressing the school's weaknesses, (5) help the team to implement their plans, and (6) provide follow-up assistance and evaluation. South Dakota has adopted a similar approach to its effective schools program.

A number of the states have begun to adopt innovative approaches to technical assistance and staff development aimed at building ongoing capacity at the local level. For example, Kentucky encourages districts to join in collaboratives and consortia through which schools and districts can leverage their funds to purchase professional development that they might not get access to individually. California has begun to build a series of teacher networks tied together by reforms in particular content areas. Connecticut has a program that pairs experienced and novice teachers for a year. Each of these examples seeks to move professional development beyond the traditional one-time workshop.

Financing Local Reforms

State dollars are an important resource for states as well as districts in supporting reform (Figure 10). Funds from the regular state budget are used by nearly two-thirds of states studied. California, Washington, and South Dakota are each awarding restructuring grants on a competitive basis to districts to foster creativity for local reform. Washington's Schools for the 21st Century, recognizing the need for teacher planning and collaboration, devised grants to provide 10 additional days per year for this purpose to participating schools. Modernization grants in South Dakota pay half the salaries of local project directors (usually teachers) to ensure that decentralized, school-based restructuring activities are sustained over time. California's restructuring initiative (SB 1274) anticipated the need for an extended period of design and conceptualizing activities and awarded planning grants to schools with promising reform ideas.

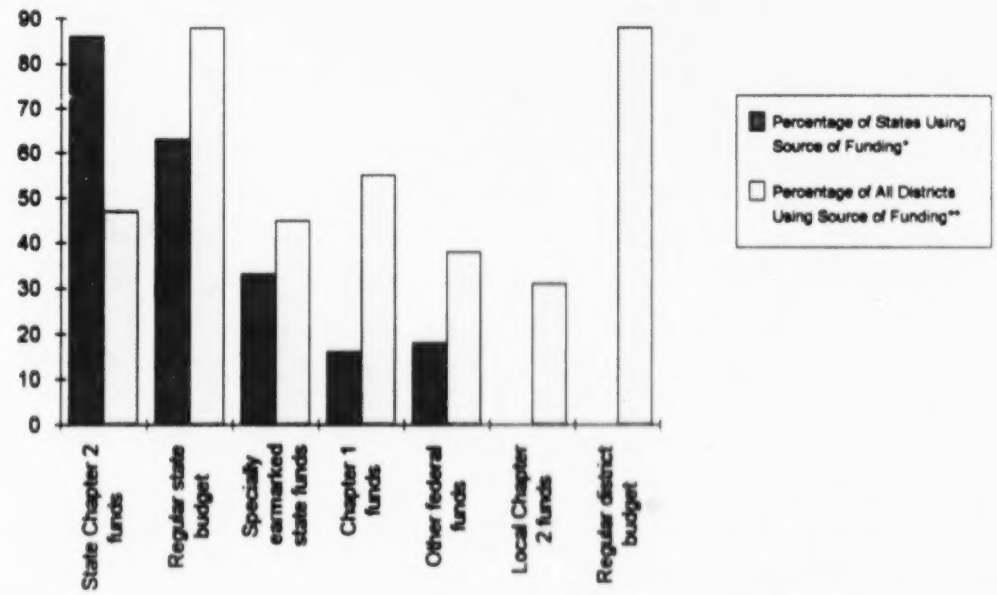


Figure reads: "63 percent of states reported using regular state education budget funds to sponsor school-based reform...."

* Source: State telephone survey. These data pertain specifically to the reform effort that was the primary focus of the telephone interview.

** Source: District survey.

FIGURE 10 SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR SCHOOL-BASED REFORM

Creating Appropriate Accountability Mechanisms

A final strategy that states use to support reform involves assessment and accountability. Creating and/or adopting assessment instruments that reflect the state's articulated learning goals can have a powerful influence on teachers' propensity to adopt similar goals. If states can put a good test in place, they can profit from teachers who have a tendency to align their teaching with the tests. Using these assessments as part of an accountability program can provide a politically acceptable counterweight to proposals to give schools more autonomy. This strategy involves providing schools with more authority to design their own reforms in exchange for greater accountability for results.

Although the states we studied all were interested in rethinking their assessment and accountability systems, each had to struggle with technical and political problems inherent in doing so. Technically, it is difficult to develop a valid and cost-effective assessment instrument that actually measures the kind of critical thinking reflected in state education goals. California exemplifies the problems inherent in creating new assessment instruments. The state has promulgated new and more challenging learning goals since the early to mid-1980s, but not until the early 1990s did it develop a full assessment system to track schools' progress in meeting those goals. The state finally developed new tests that are more performance oriented and focused to a greater degree on critical thinking. Yet, for a variety of political reasons, these tests may never be institutionalized.

Regardless of the quality of a state's assessment system, however, using test results as part of an accountability system raises a series of political issues. What should happen to schools whose students perform poorly (or well) on state-mandated tests? In some states, Washington and South Dakota in our sample, long traditions of local control preclude the state from placing any type of sanctions on poorly performing schools. In fact, unless a school is on the verge of collapse, most state governments are reluctant to take any punitive action. More often, states follow California's example: tests are mandated and the state publicizes the results, which usually end up in statewide and local papers. The fear of negative publicity and the desire for favorable coverage are often the only factors that make the state test results important to local educators.

Again, Kentucky's is the most far-reaching reform in this area. In Kentucky, schools are given a biennial "threshold" target score based on their first year's (1991-92) results on the state's new tests. Schools that meet or surpass those scores are to be rewarded with extra funds and bonuses for teachers. Schools that fail are required to develop

improvement plans with the assistance of the state. Schools that continue to fail are labeled "in crisis," teachers and principals are put on probation and may be dismissed, students can transfer to successful schools, and the school is taken over by a "distinguished educator" chosen by the state.

Summing Up: The Emerging State Role in Supporting Reform

These findings suggest that, in many states, the most promising reform strategies may combine increased state leadership and support with less direct state control over local education. State governments generally have (or have the potential for) political potency and technical and financial capacity that far exceed those of nearly all local districts. As such, they are uniquely placed to support reform efforts.

The key to state leadership of reform efforts appears to be the establishment of a well-articulated vision of what the state's schools are supposed to produce in terms of student learning. Backed by a consensus of state leaders and communicated with sufficient clarity and specificity, such a vision can rally public support for reform efforts and harness the necessary resources to move reform forward—as has happened over the past decade in California and the past few years in Kentucky.

When state support links this vision to a series of state-sponsored activities aimed at building local capacity to carry out reforms, districts and schools find the state's involvement in school-based reform helpful and productive. Of particular importance is the provision of professional development, assistance in such thorny areas as student assessment, and supplementary financial resources. Such capacity building has to be viewed as a long-term developmental process by which districts, schools, and networks of teachers combine to build an ongoing ability to improve themselves without the need to involve outside expertise at every turn.

In seeking to facilitate school-based reform, states strike a delicate balance between state direction and local control. Certainly, our findings suggest that schools undergoing reform seek more autonomy from what they perceive as unnecessary regulations—and in those cases (e.g., Washington's Schools for the 21st Century or California's restructuring schools), the granting of greater authority to schools has had no deleterious effects. The extent to which states choose to grant such autonomy, as well as the degree to which states choose to hold schools accountable for results, will necessarily depend on their own political contexts.

Federal Support for School-Based Reform

Unlike the states, the federal government has little direct control over what takes place in schools. Yet, over the past three decades, the federal government has played a vital leadership role in promoting school reform. The 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (P.L. 100-297), which prompted this study, codified a federal commitment to school-based reform by adding greater accountability to the Chapter 1 program and a more explicit targeting strategy to the Chapter 2 program.* This change to Chapter 2 included the requirement that states use a portion of their funds to support effective schools programs. The combination of federal mandate and federal money has been among the factors leading states and districts to initiate and expand their school reform activities.

Federal Mandates as Reasons for Initiating School-Based Reforms

The federal requirement contained in the 1988 Chapter 2 legislation that states spend a portion of their funds on effective-schools-related programs clearly influenced some state reform activities. The state administrators we surveyed in states that began their school-based reform efforts after passage of the federal legislation in 1988 reported that the Chapter 2 requirement was the most important reason for beginning their program (Figure 11).

Although these data point to the influence of Chapter 2, we should not overstate the law's effect on state and local improvement efforts. State survey data reflect the single program in the state that respondents chose to focus on in our interviews—not all possible reform activities. Consequently, we cannot conclude that Chapter 2 was the primary reason that states initiated **all** their reform activities after 1988.

The case study data paint a more realistic picture of Chapter 2's important but limited effect on school reform activities. For example, in California, the state uses Chapter 2 funds to fund its grade-level task forces (elementary, middle school, and high

---

* This study took place during the 1991-92 school year, before the federal initiatives enacted in 1994: Goals 2000 and Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). The latter act amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

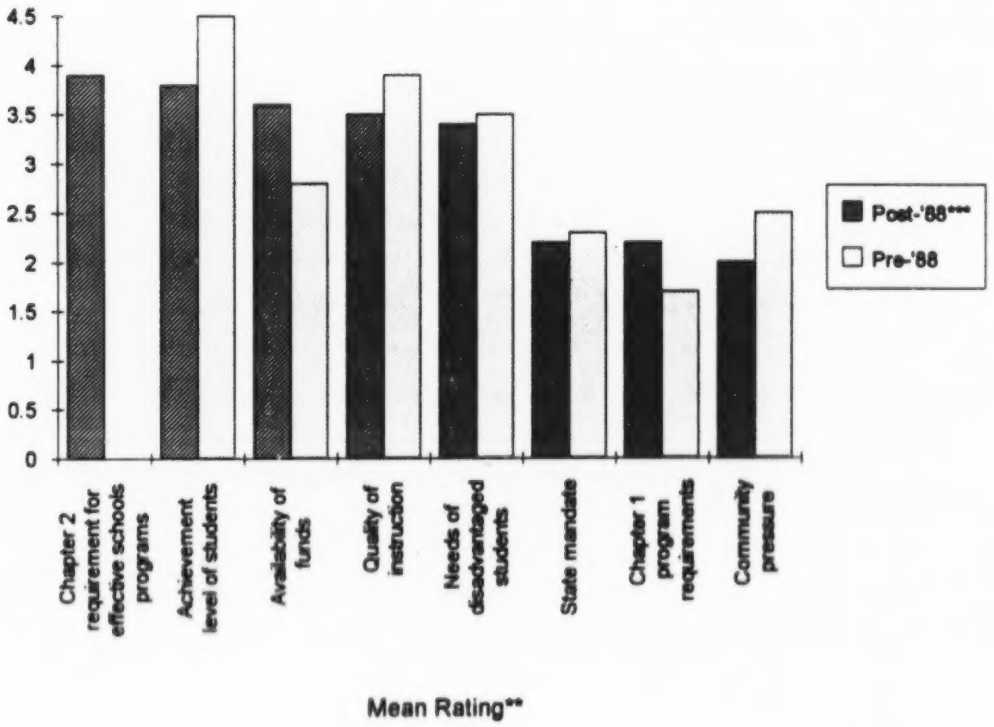


Figure reads: "In those states that began reform efforts after 1988, state respondents gave Chapter 2 requirements for effective schools programs a 3.9 mean rating of importance (on a 1 to 5 scale) as a reason for initiating state support for school-based reform...."

* Data pertain to the program or programs that were the primary focus of the state telephone survey.

** Mean ratings are based on a 5-point scale, where 5 = extremely important, 4 = very important, 3 = moderately important, 2 = somewhat important, and 1 = not at all important. (Midpoint is 3.0.) Reasons are ordered by mean rating.

*** Pre-'88 and post-'88 refer to the year the school-based reform began.

Source: State telephone survey.

FIGURE 11 REASONS FOR INITIATING STATE SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL-BASED REFORM*

school), among other purposes. These highly visible committees play a central role in rethinking all curricular areas and in the grade levels under their purview. Clearly, Chapter 2 is supporting a significant reform activity; however, there are a number of other school improvement efforts in California that function independently of the federal program—including a key restructuring initiative supporting comprehensive school-based change in a number of schools around the state.

Connecticut and Washington State illustrate similar reactions to the Chapter 2 legislation. Both states use Chapter 2 to support statewide improvement efforts. Yet both states' central school-based reform initiatives (Schools for the 21st Century in Washington and the Connecticut Effective Schools process) are funded from state sources. In South Dakota, by contrast, Chapter 2 funds the entire state effective schools effort—but the program began in 1987, a year before the federal mandate came into effect.

Federal Funds and Support for Reform

In addition to the specific Chapter 2 mandates, the availability of funds has been an important factor in supporting reform efforts. For example, states rely heavily on Chapter 2 monies to support state-level reform activities (see Figure 10). In addition, almost half of all school districts receive state Chapter 2 funds to support school-based reform activities. Significantly, other federal sources (most notably Chapter 1) are key methods of support for local reforms. On average, district reform agendas/effective schools programs receive 13.4 percent of their funding from Chapter 2.

Summing Up: The Evolving Federal Role

Although the federal government exercises virtually no direct control over education in the states, it plays key leadership and support roles in helping state and local educators to pursue improvement efforts. In this role, federal policy makers, like their state counterparts, need to balance ongoing support for reform efforts with the need to allow states, districts, and schools sufficient autonomy.

The 1988 Chapter 2 program is one attempt to strike this balance. Clearly, the availability of federal Chapter 2 dollars as a marginal resource for states has allowed them to pursue promising reforms, some of which they might not have tried otherwise.

Moreover, there is a set of states that initiated support for school-based reform directly as a result of the Chapter 2 mandate, Kentucky (in 1988) being an example.

The data from this study suggest that continued federal support for a range of school-based reforms is fully justified. Yet, in light of the evolution of school-based reform since the late 1980s, and as more states become increasingly active in the reform arena (as did Kentucky), it makes sense for federal policy makers to reconsider the strictness of the federal requirement for state support of effective schools programs. For example, the definition of "effective schools programs" could be broadened to include other forms of school-based reform.* Finally, the study findings suggest the importance of continued federal support, through Chapter 2 or similar programs (e.g., the Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Program), for professional development and local capacity building.

* In fact, the recently reauthorized Chapter 2 program, now Title VI of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), does provide greater flexibility to states, districts, and schools in promoting school improvement.

REFERENCES

Brookover, W. B., & Lezotte, L. W. (1977). *Changes in school characteristics coincident with changes in student achievement*. East Lansing: Michigan State University, College of Urban Development.

Connecticut State Board of Education. (1987). *Connecticut's common core of learning*. Hartford: Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction.

David, J. L. (1989). Synthesis of research on school-based management. *Educational Leadership, 46*(8), 45-53.

David, J., & Shields, P. M. (1991). *From effective schools to restructuring: A literature review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation.

Edmonds, R. R. (1979, October). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership, 37*, 15-24.

Edmonds, R. R. (1982). Programs of school improvement: An overview. *Educational Leadership, 40*(3), 4-12.

Edmonds, R., & Frederiksen, J. R. (1978). *Search for effective schools: The identification and analysis of city schools that are instructionally effective for poor children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Center for Urban Studies.

Elmore, R. F., & Associates. (1991). *Restructuring schools: The next generation of educational reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Knapp, M. S., Adelman, N. E., Marder, C., McCollum, H., Needels, M. C., Shields, P. M., Turnbull, B. J., & Zucker, A. A. (1992). *Academic challenge for the children of poverty. Vol. I: Findings and conclusions* (Contract No. LC88054001). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning.

McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*, 171-178.

McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (1993). Introduction: New visions of teaching. In D. K. Cohen, & M. W. McLaughlin, & J. E. Talbert (Eds.), *Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice* (pp. 1-10). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Means, B., Chelemer, C., & Knapp, M. S. (Eds.). (1991). *Teaching advanced skills to at-risk students: Views from research and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. (1983). Effective schools: A review. *Elementary School Journal, 83*(4), 427-452.

Shields, P. M., Anderson, L., Bamburg, J. D., Hawkins, E. F., Knapp, M. S., Ruskus, J., Wechsler, M., & Wilson, C. L. (1995). *Improving schools from the bottom up: From effective schools to restructuring*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

ISBN 0-16-048102-3